

Cheveley Parish Council

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MINUTES

Cheveley Parish Council Extra-Ordinary Full Council Meeting on
Friday 28th February 2020 at 6.00pm
at the United Reformed Church Hall, High Street, Cheveley

Present: Councillors Claire Elbrow (Chair), Richard Fullerton, Jane Gibson, James Hadlow, Sheila Marvin, Brent Noble, Sallie Thomas (Vice-Chair) and Sue Willows.

There were 21 members of the public present.
The meeting was opened at 6.00pm.

138/19/20 Apologies and approvals for absence

Cllr Day (personal). County Cllr Mathew Shuter (personal)
1st Cheveley Brownies - away on a residential weekend.

139/19/20 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

Cllr Noble declared a personal interest.

140/19/20 Open Forum for Public Participation (10 mins)

The Chair explained the need for the meeting, given the short timelines for sealed bids imposed by the agent.

Attending the meeting were representatives from existing community groups in Cheveley, plus Cheveley Primary School and its Board of Governors, as well as residents of Cheveley parish.

The School and Governors expressed an expectation of future expansion and a new pre-school provision.

Concern was expressed about the effect of the purchase of the URC Hall on the proposed improvements at the pavilion in the Recreation Ground, also that the Parish Council (PC) would have two buildings to maintain and operate, either of which could be in competition with the Community Room.

The Chair read out the text of telephone conversations and emails with Ian Trafford of Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC), and also various letters and emails from the Chair of the Board of Governors and community groups expressing their views on the acquisition of the URC Hall for community use.

It was noted by the Chair and CCC that the information provided to the PC by CCC regarding expansion at the school does not match the information provided by the school and Governors to the PC. There is a discrepancy between the two pupil forecast figures. As this was only identified on the afternoon of the meeting, clarification is being sought.

The benefits of retaining the building for community use with a D1 status were discussed, but the main discussion was about keeping the URC Hall as part of the community, as it has been

for many years. If this site is lost to the community it will be gone forever, and no similar site exists.

The Parish Council is the only organisation which has funds immediately available for the purchase and can act quickly enough to meet the seller's deadline.

The URC Hall is currently used by various community groups and, of course, the Church, and these community groups would be displaced if the Hall were lost to the community.

The public debate ran for approximately one hour.

141/19/20 Purchase of URC Building as Community Hub

- (a) Report (verbal) from viewings.
Each Councillor expressed their impressions gained from previous viewings of the facilities at the URC Hall. Views included that it is centrally located on the High Street, has parking, safe outside space, and adequate kitchen and toilet facilities, is disability compliant, is well-known among residents and in total has greater inside space available than other venues in Cheveley.
- (b) To consider advice from KJ Architects.
Keith Johns, of KJ Architects, expressed his professional view that the site and existing buildings could make an excellent community hub, but warned that some maintenance work is required in the near future to prevent later expensive deterioration. The work suggested included new windows and investigating damp issues, and he advised the PC that a survey should be undertaken. Councillors agreed that any offer would be subject to the receipt of a satisfactory structural survey.
- (c) Implications of purchase on the pavilion project.
Money spent on the purchase of the URC Hall means that less public money will be available to spend on the pavilion improvements, but money may still be available for more targeted improvements.
- (d) Implications of timing regarding communicating this option with community groups.
All community groups had been contacted by email/telephone with information about the Extraordinary Meeting, and had responded or were represented at the meeting.
- (e) CONFIDENTIAL: - To consider purchase of URC building – offers invited in the region of £125k. The views expressed during the earlier public debate were that the purchase of the URC Hall would be a benefit to the community, providing publicly available space for individuals and community groups, including anticipated expansion of the school and a pre-school provision. Councillors unanimously agreed that the Parish Council should submit an offer of £149,000, conditional on receiving a satisfactory structural survey, to the seller's agent by the due date of 12 noon, Monday 2 March 2020, for the purchase of the URC Hall for community use.

The specific terms of the offer to be put forward were discussed after it had been resolved to exclude members of the public and press: -

Revelation of the purchase price is considered likely to prejudice the commercial position of the PC in making its offer.

Meeting closed at 7.35pm.

142/19/20 Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 10 March, 7.30pm at the Community Room, Cheveley Primary School